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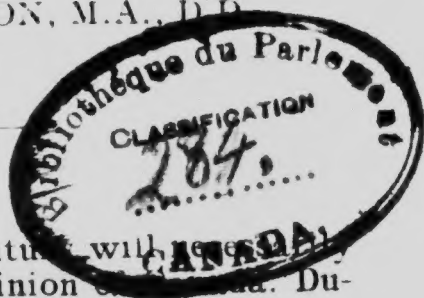
The extraordinary Privileges of the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec

REV. CALVIN E. AMARON, M.A., D.D.
QUEBEC.

Introduction.

The first decades of this century will be a crucial epoch for the Dominion of Canada. During this formation period, certain things must necessarily be done. To defer the doing of them, were to imperil the future of this British colony, which is making great strides toward nationhood.

The growth of Canada, its development not merely from a commercial and material point of view, but intellectually and spiritually, will depend very largely on what is now done or left undone by way of solving great and perplexing problems, the magnitude and importance of which are realized by the few only.



An Eastern Problem.

The Protestant Church of Canada in a large measure realize that the coming into our country of thousands of immigrants from Europe and elsewhere, with their erroneous beliefs, their false notions of government, their ill-conceived ideas of education, liberty and civilization, constitutes one of the most serious of problems.

It is now generally felt that if we fail to educate these masses, if we fail to instil in their minds right conceptions of government, if we do not put forth well-directed efforts to make of them good, Christian citizens, they will be a menace to the state, seriously retard the growth of the nation and imperil the stability of our British institutions.

Rome's Policy.

But whilst this fact is being more and more realized by the membership of the church and by Christian patriots generally; whilst contributions are increasing for what is known as Home Missions there are but few, comparatively speaking, who seem aware of the fact that the country has also an Eastern problem to solve, a problem which for generations perplexed the nation and given color to legislation bearing on most of the vital questions which affect the destinies of Canaua. This Quebec problem is of surpassing importance, and we cannot afford to remain indifferent to it.

It is imagined by many, that we have nothing to fear from Roman Catholic aggression, as a nation. For some unaccountable reason, men who are looked upon as being of sober judgment, close their eyes to the history of the Church of Rome in this British Colony, and in all the countries where she has held power.

They seem unwilling to make themselves acquainted with the dangerous principles by which she is governed and which she applies where and when she can.

They will not take in the fact that Rome claims to be infallible, and neither can nor does repudiate her claims to supremacy in matters religious and political. She claims to be the only church and therefore it is right for her even now to use force to destroy heresy.

We find that Protestant politicians, journalists, educationalists, jurists and ministers console themselves by nourishing the myth that the spirit of the hierarchy has changed, that modernism is about to revolutionize the papacy and that we have nothing to fear in this Dominion, from this politico-religious organization that has in many ways been a curse to French Canada, and through it, has checked so long the commercial, intellectual and moral life of the nation.

It is precisely this unhealthy optimism which gives strength and vantage ground to this ultramontane institution, and allows it to mature its plans and work out its policy.

It would be exceedingly unwise to let Rome manoeuvre at will, especially in view of the unfair privileges she enjoys in Quebec. It is much safer for us to realize what she is aiming at and steadily working for, not so openly as in past years to be sure, but rather in secret conclaves such as the recent ecclesiastical congress in Quebec.

England's mistake.

It is the fixed and unaltered policy of the Romish hierarchy, to keep the Province of Quebec both French and Roman Catholic, with the view in time

of making it an independent French papal state. It is now straining every nerve to bring back the French Canadians from the United States and mass them in different parts of the country.

In order to attain her object, it is necessary for the Romish hierarchy to perpetuate the antiquated and mediaeval system of education which has been a curse to Canada, and has given to the Province of Quebec the unenviable reputation of being the most illiterate province of the Dominion. The hierarchy of the Church of Rome are well aware of the fact, that the spirit of freedom and independence which breathes in the British constitution does not make docile slaves of the Church, and she loves and admires British institutions only so far as she can make of them instruments to create slaves for herself.

Canada's misfortune.

Every fair-minded man who has studied the history of this country is compelled to admit that England made a mistake when she agreed to leave her newly acquired colony practically under the regime which had proved to be so detrimental to the best interests of the people, and made of them an irresponsible body of serfs, instead of free men.

Everybody will admit that if the English government had seen into the future, and whilst allowing the free exercise of the Roman Catholic religion, had insisted that proper education be dispensed, British freedom truly given to the people, and had the laws which have helped to make Britain great been introduced in the new colony, French Canada would not have remained at a standstill as it has for generations, nor worn so long the swaddling clothes of commercial, industrial, intellectual, moral and religious infancy.

Must this state of things continue ?

The loss which has resulted to Canada by reason of England's ill-advised policy appears clearly when we compare the growth of the New England colony under Protestant-British principles, with that of New France under Romish rule. Hundreds of French Canadians readily admit that it was the misfortune of French Canada to have been left by England in subjugation to the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Why so many Protestants appear anxious that this undesirable state of things should continue, when so many French would rejoice to see it come to an end, passes understanding.

Is there no redress ?

Christian patriots who see clearly that the Province of Quebec has been and continues to be the real obstacle to national expansion and consolidation are asking the pertinent question: "Will the Church of Rome henceforth and for ever, stand as a barrier to arrest the progress and permanent prosperity of Canada ?"

Must she for ever make it impossible for us to have a national system of education that shall make British citizens first and Roman Catholics next, for those whose convictions are in that direction.

When our Dominion parliament is called upon to legislate in matters educational, shall our statesmen ever be constrained to consult the wishes of Monseigneur Stagni and other dignitaries of the Roman Catholic hierarchy ?

Must this state-church, for she is nothing short of this in Quebec, forever interfere in the political affairs of our nation and compel our Parliament to

do her bidding ? Shall we forever be prevented from working out our destiny as a nation according to approved ideals ?

Shall one Church which claims supremacy over the state, and makes no bones of it, continue to isolate one of the largest provinces of the Confederation from the rest of the nation, against the desire of a large number of French Canadians, and thus prevent the unification and consolidation of our Dominion ?

Roman Catholic interference.

To the question: "Is there no redress?" the majority have accustomed themselves to answer: "We cannot help ourselves. Rome possesses treaty rights which England is bound to respect."

But is such the case ? Were such immunities and privileges as are enjoyed by the Church of Rome and of which she makes such abuse, granted her by the treaty of Paris of 1763 ? It is only necessary to read the history of that period to be convinced that no such rights were granted by the treaty.

It is not by reason of the treaty of Paris that the Church of Rome has enjoyed for over a hundred years in the Province of Quebec, immunities and privileges unknown in any other part of the world.

It seems strange that here, under a Protestant king, in the 20th century, the Church of Rome should exercise many of the powers that belong to the state, that she should "sit as a queen in Quebec, panoplied in its assumptions by law, receiving from the state whatever she asks, dominating the province as the first interest to be considered and served."

One or two instances can be cited. In a parish not far from my own charge, the farms have been saddled with a heavy tax for the building of a

\$125,000 church, for a period of forty years. Some Protestant farmers who desired to purchase farms in that locality were deterred from doing so because they would have been compelled by law to pay that tax to the Roman Catholic Church during the entire period. Thus the settlement of the country is affected in favor of Rome.

In Montreal, by reason of an unjust law, some \$30,000 of Protestant money must be handed over yearly to the Roman Catholic Schools. This law applies to the whole province. The Protestant taxpayer is compelled by law, to support confessional schools in which principles and doctrines which are repugnant to his faith are taught during a good portion of the school hours.

Shall this British colony submit for ever to Romish rule?

This is not all, but we find that the church interferes everywhere she can. Not satisfied with what she has in Quebec, she is standing in the way of the farseeing builders of the nation, in educational matters. It was at her bidding that the public school system of Ontario was crippled and made far less effective than it would have been without clerical interference.

It was the Church of Rome of the Province of Quebec in an especial manner, which caused the serious trouble in connection with the Manitoba school question, which led the leader of one of the great parties to take a stand which resulted in a most inglorious defeat for his party.

She is now blocking the way of the Manitoba government which has several times attempted to pass a compulsory educational bill. Ordinary common sense sees a wise safeguard in such a measure, forestalling as it would do many dangers that

threaten the province by reason of its heterogenous population.

The inconsistency of the Laurier government on the educational question, when Alberta and Saskatchewan were raised to the status of provinces, was due to the fear of the Roman Catholic vote. The government had to trim its sails to suit the clerical winds.

It cannot be too often repeated that the ideas and principles of the Church of Rome on religious, educational and political questions are generally anti-British, and cannot but be; it is because of this that she cannot be satisfied with the liberties enjoyed by other religious bodies. She has the presumption of considering herself above all other churches. She claims to be the only church whose mission and right it is to dominate the world.

It is no doubt supposed by many that these are the views of theologians of the middle age, but it is not so. These doctrines are reiterated with the sanction of the Pope in the most recent Catholic works. It is unhesitatingly and unblushingly declared that Rome being the only infallible church, has the right to depose heretical princes and destroy heretics, in the name of God.

It might be well for England to hasten slowly in changing the order of things in some directions.

When a church has had such a past which she refuses to repudiate, when she is governed by principles which she cannot abandon because they are the logical consequence of a pivotal dogma, papal infallibility, it is impossible for her to allow the Protestant portion of Canada to work out its destinies without serious interference.

No treaty rights stand in the way.

The time has fully come for British Protestants to study calmly and dispassionately the question : " Shall Canada, a colony of Britain, continue forever to bear Romish rule ? " We say Romish rule and not French rule advisedly. It is not French domination that we need fear, if the French Canadians are emancipated from the yoke of Rome. The danger does not lie in this direction.

There are thousands of French Canadians that sympathize with the views expressed in this pamphlet. They are thoroughly tired of the limitations placed upon them and would only be too glad to be free. Their hands are tied, their business interests, their social position, their political career, their all is at stake and they remain more or less silent. They say to us : " Go on, we are in sympathy with you, but we are not strong enough to take the lead."

Now it is the privilege, nay it is the bounden duty of English Protestantism, both for the sake of the French race in Canada and the entire country, to assist in the emancipation of Quebec from the chains of an antiquated system of religion and education which has proved absolutely wanting.

Legislature can undo what it did.

But how far can we go ? Can we ask England to take away from the Church of Rome privileges which were granted her when Canada was ceded to Great Britain ?

We reply that the people of this Dominion, for the most part, labor under a misapprehension when they affirm that England granted to French Cana-

da the immunities and privileges now claimed and enjoyed.

The limits assigned me in this pamphlet, will make it impossible for me to discuss at any length this vital question. It may suffice to call attention to a book written by Mr. Robert Sellar, Editor of the "Huntingdon Gleaner", entitled "The Tragedy of Quebec", in which the author deals fully with the matter and cognate questions. This book should be read by all who are interested in the welfare of our country.

Mr. Sellar shows clearly, by numerous quotations, that by the treaty of Paris, signed in February 1763, the church of Rome was given no such privileges as she now enjoys. The free exercise of the Roman Catholic religion was of course granted, and no one dreams of interfering in any sense with that privilege, but the obligation on the part of the people to pay tithes "was made to depend on the Kings' pleasure."

Twenty-four years after these words of Amherst had been written, Attorney-General Masères testified in the House of Commons, that the priests never presumed to sue for tithes in the Courts, knowing that there was no possibility of succeeding. The Paris treaty had not given them any such right.

It was not through the provisions of the treaty of Paris therefore that the church of Rome obtained what to all intents and purposes may be called the status of a state-church in Quebec. The unreasonable and exacting privileges she possesses and enjoys exclusively of all other churches, were granted her, under very strong protest, by the Quebec Act of 1774, and by a succession of favors from the Quebec and Dominion Legislatures.

It was the Quebec Act, passed after the most vigorous opposition in London, in the year 1774, that restored French law repealed test-oaths and invested the priesthood with authority to levy tithes and dues.

The question should be agitated.

Now when legislature grants unfair and dangerous privileges, when it invests one church with powers she abuses to crush British subjects, stunt their intellectual life and practically destroy religious liberty and check the progress and prosperity of the entire nation, surely legislature can repeal acts of this nature, when the entire nation would be benefited.

No one asks that the liberties of the Church of Rome be limited.

Why should the people of this Dominion agitate in this direction ? Would a well-directed agitation having in view the repeal of such obnoxious laws as those referred to be justified ? Is it time to look into the law which governs marriage, and ascertain once for all if it is true that Rome is above the state in this particular ? Most undoubtedly and this for several reasons.

First, because no treaty rights would need be set aside.

Secondly, because it is contrary to British fair play and to the spirit of the constitution, to place one religious organization above all others.

Thirdly, because of the dangerous assumptions of the Church of Rome, which claims to be above the state and pledges itself to give its first allegiance to a foreign potentate, the Italian pope of Rome, rather than the King of Britain.

Fourthly, because by reason of the abuse Rome has made of her extraordinary privileges, French Canada has suffered irreparable loss. The people have been kept in shameful ignorance, which has resulted in poverty and wholesale immigration to the Protestant republic south of us.

Fifthly, because the placing of the Church of Rome on an equal footing with the other religious bodies of the country, would be hailed with thankfulness by a very large number of French Canadians; the change would come to them as one of the greatest blessings.

Sixthly, because Canada will never be a free, united and prosperous nation until Quebec is emancipated from the thralldom of Romanism.

Steps toward the solution of the problem.

No one asks that the liberties of the Church of Rome be curtailed. We only plead for more freedom for its adepts.

What we do ask is that she no longer be a politico religious organization, but like other churches of the country, a purely spiritual power.

Being that and no more, if she cannot maintain her ground side by side with other religious bodies in Canada, if she cannot stand when deprived of the unwise and unfair privileges granted her by acts of parliament, contrary to the judgment of the most able statesmen of the period, so much the worse for the hierarchy, but undoubtedly so much the better for the French Canadians and for the whole country.

When I say this, I voice the convictions of hundreds of the leading men in French Canada, who earnestly desire to introduce reform measures but feel powerless to do so.

We have been playing fast and loose too long with this great problem. The time has fully come to grapple with it with manly courage and Irish patriotism.

The solution of the problem is in the hands of English Protestantism.

It is always easier to state a problem than to solve it. Yet, however difficult the solution of this question may be, the task should not be looked upon as hopeless.

A long step shall have been taken in the right direction, when we shall have learnt to make a distinction between French and Roman Catholic. The terms are by no means synonymous.

It is not the French race as such that has stood as an obstacle to the emancipation of our Dominion. It is the ultramontane system of religion and politics which has held and in a large measure holds the French race in tutelage that has arrested the progress of Canada in the past.

It is not with an intelligent, well-disposed, religiously inclined people that we are in conflict, but it is with the domineering power that oppresses this people, by reason of its principles of government both temporal and spiritual.

We claim that ultramontaniam cannot concord with British citizenship. We take the ground that from the moment the French Canadians will be truly free from the ecclesiastical fetters in which they are held, they will become free, loyal and happy citizens of this country. They will continue to love their tongue, and who could blame them for that, but they will not side with a hierarchy that is interested in keeping them in comparative ignorance.

It is thought that there are about 20,000 French

Protestant Canadians in Canada. These love their beautiful tongue, learn to speak and write it, but they never give a moment of anxiety to our nation builders.

It is not by coercion, nor by accident that they are Protestant British citizens, but because their minds, hearts and consciences find satisfaction in the Gospel principles which they have accepted, and which underlie all the liberties of Christian civilization.

In the measure in which we give the Gospel and a liberal education to the French of Canada, in that same measure shall we hasten the solution of the French problem in Canada.

We have all to lose by making of this question one of race; we make a mistake when we attribute the backward condition of Quebec to race defectiveness. It is a question of education, of religion and of intellectual development.

A race that can boast of its Papineaus, of its Lafontaines, of its Morins, of its Fréchettes, of its Cremazies, of its Garneaus, of its Lauriers, and of a host of other political and literary lights, has no reason to consider itself inferior to the Anglo-Saxon or any other race.

The French Canadians who are fully in sympathy with British laws and institutions, and are doing what they can for the prosperity of their country, cannot but lament that Governor Carleton **should have felt obliged** to adopt the policy which led to the passing of the Quebec Act. He feared that the Thirteen Colonies in revolt, would be joined by the Province of Quebec, if he did not secure the cooperation of the clergy and the good-will of the "habitants."

Time has shown very clearly that the results of

this policy have not been beneficial to the conquered race nor to the country in general.

A French independent paper.

It belongs to English Protestantism to solve this question. If French Canada does not fall into line with the other provinces of the Dominion, the fault will lie very largely with Protestantism.

The thoughtful and educated men of the Province of Quebec are more than anxious that their liberties should no longer be restrained by the Romish hierarchy. Time and again they have founded papers in which they have given expression to their advanced views. But the clergy, by an abuse of power, has killed them.

They are anxious to reform the educational system of Quebec, to secure the liberty of the press and freedom of action generally speaking, but instead of meeting with encouragement from their English Protestant fellow-citizens, it is the opposing party that gets it. Thousands of dollars are contributed by Protestants to strengthen and build up a system which is hurtful to the best interests of the French race, whilst it is next to impossible to secure help for institutions which are creating loyal British citizens.

We have said that education of the right kind will speedily put the people of French Canada in full sympathy with British modes of thought. That the people are anxious for just such education is shown by the fact that our large French Protestant schools at Pointe-aux-Trembles, as well as those of other Protestant bodies are overcrowded. These schools turn out intelligent, well-informed young men and young women, trained on right lines, familiarized with the British constitution. From these

we can expect co-operation in the building of the nation.

Why should not the Christian patriots of Canada multiply these institutions? One is needed in the Ottawa Valley, another in the St. Lawrence Valley in the vicinity of Quebec, and the need of others will soon be felt. By means of the education given in such schools, in a very few years, the French Canadians will be led to see eye to eye with those who are intent on making Canada prosperous, great and happy.

If English Protestantism is in earnest, if it is desired that this British colony remain in its entirety loyal to the crown and become the gem of England, let a number of capitalists form a strong company, with ample capital, to establish and maintain a French daily paper absolutely independent, absolutely free from all fetters, political or religious, and thus able to discuss unhampered the great questions of the day, the living issues which lie at the foundation of national prosperity; a paper that need not ask each day permission from the hierarchy to exist. No such paper exists in Canada, and it is a question whether an English daily of this nature can be found in the country.

The times are propitious for earnest work. If English Protestantism has not lost its vitality, if it is truly anxious that Canada shall remain British and preserve the traditions for which English institutions stand, let it come to the help of those who by approved and successful methods have done and are doing much to solve one of the most vital problems which has ever been proposed to our nation for solution.